Vol. VIII. Numb. 99

THE OBSERVATOR.

A Letter complaining of the undue Practices of Bakers, in cheating the People of their due Weight of Bread; with Propoſals how to redreſs it. Hints at Methods how the meaner Sort may oblige the Bakers to give them full Weight, and the Farmers to lower the Price of Wheat, by making and baking their own Bread, and mixing their Flower with Meal of other Grain, and of Roots, as is practis'd in other Countries during Years of the greateſt Plenty.

From Saturday, January 7. to Wednesday, January 11. 1709.

Country-m. YOU know, Maſter, we have had ſeveral Letters complaining of the miſerable Condition of the Poor, by Reaſon of the high Price of Bread. Here's another from a publick-ſpirited Gentleman, pointing at the Cauſe, with humble Propoſals ſubmitted to the Conſideration of our Legiſlature about the Cure.

SIR,

'ABout the latter End of *November* 1709, when 'the Price of Wheat was at the higheſt, ac-'cording to the Aſſize of Bread then ſet by the 'Lord Mayor and Court of Aldermen,

	l.	*oz.*	*dr.*
'Every 18 *d.* white Loaf ought to have 'weigh'd Avoirdupois-Weight,	5	12	4
'An 18 *d.* wheaten Loaf,	8	11	8
'An 18 *d.* houſhold Loaf,	11	9	10

December 27. 1709.

'By the Aſſizes of Bread lately advanc'd ſince 'the Prices of Wheat have been fallen, for what 'Reaſon may be worth our Enquiry,

	l.	*oz.*	*dr.*
'An 18 *d.* white Loaf ought to weigh 'Avoirdupois-Weight,	4	14	12
'An 18 *d.* wheaten Loaf,	7	6	8
'An 18 *d.* houſhold Loaf,	9	14	10

'Tho' the Bakers, by theſe Aſſizes, are, as 'tis 'ſaid, allow'd by the Court of Aldermen twelve 'Shillings Profit in every Quarter of Wheat, ac-'cording to the Prices given into the ſaid Court, 'yet notwithſtanding, they, in Contempt of the 'Authority of the ſaid Court, and of the Laws and 'Statutes of this Kingdom, ſhew no Regard to the 'Aſſizes ſet, or Orders made by the ſaid Court, 'but make and ſell what they call Half-peck 'Loaves, which weigh not above nine Pounds each. 'The Wheaten, before the late Advancement of the 'Aſſizes, they ſold at 21 *d.* the Half-peck, and the 'Houſhold at 20 *d.* but ſince they have advanc'd 'the Price a Penny in each Loaf.

'Now, by comparing the Aſſizes, and the Prices 'ſet, and the Practice of the Bakers, in impoſing 'Half-peck Loaves upon the Publick, it will ap-'pear how greatly the Queen's Subjects are op-'preſs'd, eſpecially the pooreſt Sort, who generally 'buy the houſhold Bread; and how much it concerns 'the Government to enquire into, and rectify thoſe A-'buſes, and not to ſuffer Bread, which is the Staff of 'Life, to be any longer monopoliz'd by any Company, 'Corporation, or Combination of Men whatſoever.

'The Authority of the Court of Aldermen can-'not extend beyond the City, and the Liberties 'thereof; but no Doubt the Juſtices of the Peace, 'and the chief Magiſtrates, in their reſpective Ju-'riſdictions throughout *England*, have Power to 'ſettle the Aſſize of Bread, which if they would re-'duce into Practice, the Combination of the Ba-'kers would ſoon be broken, or at leaſt confin'd 'within the City of *London*.

'The Bakers, to amuſe the Magiſtrates, and co-'lour their own exorbitant Practice, alledge the 'high Prices of Wheat in the publick Markets in 'the Country Towns about this City, but conceal 'the principal Cauſe, which is, that it is there ſold 'by unlawful Meaſures, and they buy about five 'Pecks to the Buſhel, which if the Juſtices of the 'Peace would ſuppreſs, as they are oblig'd to do by 'the Duty of their Office, the Prices of Wheat, 'and other Grains ſold in the ſaid Markets, would 'ſoon be reduc'd.

PROPOSALS humbly offer'd to the Committee appointed to bring in a Bill for ſettling the Aſſize and Price of Bread.

'1. THat all Bread be ſold by Avoirdupois-'Weight of 16 Ounces to the Pound, at 'certain Prices.

'2. That the Prices be ſettl'd in Proportion to 'the Price of the middle Sort of Wheat or Flower, 'by the Lord Mayor and Court of Aldermen for 'the City of *London*, and the Liberties thereof, and 'by the chief Magiſtrates in all other Cities, Bu-'roughs, and Towns corporate, and by the Juſti-'ces of the Peace in every County; and that ſuch 'Prices, when ſettl'd from Time to Time, be made 'publick.

'3. That all Bakers, and others, who ſell Bread, 'be oblig'd to ſell the ſame by Weight, and at the 'Prices ſettl'd as aforeſaid, under ſufficient Penalties.

'4. That all Bakers be reſtrain'd from ſelling Meal 'or Flower, under a Penalty.

'5. That the Corporation of Bakers be reſtrain'd 'from making any Gift, or preſent directly or in-'directly to the Lord Mayor of the City of *London*, 'or to any other Magiſtrate in the City, or elſe-'where, or to any of their under Officers, or any 'other Perſon or Perſons, for their, or either of their 'Uſe, under the Penalty of having their Corpora-'tion diſſolv'd to all Intents and Purpoſes.

'6. And that all Bakers, and others, ſelling 'Bread, be likewiſe reſtrain'd from making any 'Gifts or Preſents, directly or indirectly, to any of 'the Perſons aforeſaid, under great Penalties.

'7. That all Forfeitures ariſing by this Act, be 'one Moiety to the Queen, her Heirs, and Suc-'ceſſors, and the other Moiety to ſuch Perſon or 'Perſons who ſhall ſue for the ſame in any of her 'Majeſty's Courts of Record, by Action of Debt, 'Bill, Plaint, or Information wherein no Eſſoin, 'Protection, Wager of Law, or more than one Im-'parlance, ſhall be allow'd, the Proſecutor to have 'Coſt of Suit.

Obſ. The Publick is much oblig'd to this honeſt Gentleman for his Propoſals, *Roger*. All that you and I can do in the Matter, is, to publiſh them thus, that our Legiſlature may conſider and improve them, for the Eaſe and Benefit of the Poor, as in their Great Wiſdom they ſhall think fit. In the mean Time, 'tis my Opinion, that one good Way to bring the Bakers to Reaſon, would be for every Body to buy Meal, and bake their own Bread, which would prevent their being cheated in the Weight.

Country-m. Aye, but, Maſter, every one has not Ovens, and if they carry their Bread to the Bakers,

they

they will uſe ſuch Tricks, or bake the Bread ſo ill, that People will ſoon grow weary of that Practice, when they find no Relief by it.

Obſ. We have had ſeveral Propoſals ſent us, *Roger*, to teach People how to avoid thoſe Tricks, and among others, that the poorer Sort may bake their Bread on Iron Plates, or on thin Stones, either upon or before their Fire, as is practis'd not only by the ordinary People in *Scotland*, and in the *North* of *England*, but alſo in the Houſes of Gentlemen, and ſubſtantial Farmers, where they bake great Quantities of Bread, both well and ſpeedily, without Ovens, as is known to every Body who has been in thoſe Parts. I don't know what Reaſon can be aſſign'd why that uſeful Piece of Houſewifry mayn't be practis'd on the *South* Side of *Trent*, as well as on the *North* of it.

Country-m. Indeed, Maſter, I can aſſign none, but that our Wives, Daughters, and Maid-Servants are accuſtom'd to a more idle and lazy Way of living, eſpecially in *London*, and 50 Miles round, which neither contributes to their Health nor Vertue, tho' they may think it does to their Beauty, becauſe they have more Time to trick and trim themſelves, which does but expoſe them the more to Tentations: And after all, I have obſerv'd in my Travels, that thoſe *Northern* and other Laſſes, notwithſtanding their greater Houſewifry and Diligence, look as well, or rather better, when dreſſed, than ours do; nor do we ſee ſo many of them with callow Looks, and eat up with the Greenſickneſs, as among us. But tho' what you propoſe, Maſter, may be a good Way to bring the Bakers to Reaſon, it will not make the Farmers leſſen the Price of their Corn. Pray what do you propoſe for that?

Obſ. Allowing that this Method will not oblige Farmers to lower the Price of their Corn, *Roger*, yet 'tis a great Benefit to Families to have their full Weight of Bread; which ſhews, that the Experiment is worth trying, eſpecially by thoſe who have no better or more profitable Employment to divert them, nor Money enough to purchaſe Bread at the preſent Rate and Weight. But there may be Ways found out, *Roger*, to oblige the Farmers to lower the Prices of their Wheat, as to which we have alſo had ſeveral Propoſals ſent us, and that is, if the meaner Sort of People will mix the Flower of Barley, Oats, Rye, Peaſe and Beans, with that of Wheat. In many Places of this Iſland there are People, and thoſe of Faſhion too, who make very good Bread of Oatmeal alone, which is both palatable and nouriſhing; others make very good Bread of the Meal of Barley, Rye, and Peaſe alone; and I know no Reaſon why thoſe who are pinch'd with Want in the *Southern* Parts of the Iſland, ſhould be ſo fine-mouth'd, as not to try the Experiment; certainly 'twere much better, and more wholeſome, than to fry Grains, as our Letters ſay ſome of 'em have been forc'd to do. There's nothing more uſual in ſome Provinces of *France*, when there's Plenty of Corn in the Kingdom, than for the ordinary People to make Bread of Cheſnuts boil'd, ſtrain'd, and powder'd; others do the like with Turnips, Parſenips, Carrots, and Potatoes; and ſince we have abundance of thoſe Roots in *Britain*, our Poor, if they were induſtrious, might mix proportionable Quantities of 'em with Wheat-Flower, and make both a palatable and nouriſhing Bread. 'Tis known to every one, that in *Barbadoes* and *Jamaica* they make a good and nouriſhing Bread for their Negroes of the *Caſſavia*-Root, tho' the Juice of it be Poyſon, yet by grating it, preſſing out the Liquor, drying, bruiſing, and bolting it, they make a good Bread of it. I am ſure no Man can ſay, that our Roots, which have no ſuch poyſonous, but a wholeſome Juice, might be prepar'd in the ſame Manner, and mix'd with other Flower, which, if the Lazineſs of our Poor, and meaner Sort of People, would ſuffer them to put in Practice, the Farmers would ſoon be oblig'd to lower the Price of their Wheat, when the Demand for it came to be leſſen'd. But I hope, *Roger*, when our Legiſlature have ſettl'd the Price of Bread by the Bill now before them, there will be no need of thoſe extraordinary Methods; yet I thought it not amiſs to ſuggeſt them, that our Poor may ſee they have a great Part of the Remedy in their own Hands, if they pleaſe to make uſe of it, and lay aſide their Idleneſs and Luxury.

Advertiſements.

Juſt publiſh'd,

Prieſtcraft in Perfection, or a Detection of the Fraud of inſerting and continuing this Claule (the Church hath Power to decree Rites and Ceremonies, and Authority in Controverſies of Faith) in the 20th Article of the Articles of the Church of England. Sold by B. Bragge in Pater-Noſter-Row. Where may be had, The Proceedings of the Lords and Commons in the Year 1628 againſt Roger Manwaring, Doctor in Divinity, (the Sacheverell of thoſe Days) for two ſeditious high-flying Sermons, entitl'd, Religion and Allegiance.

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Juſt publiſh'd,

A charitable New-Year's Gift, with good News for poor Handicrafts and Tradeſmen, concerning cheap and good Bread, and other Food, &c. The Navy Royal, or a Sea-Cook turn'd Projector, containing a few Thoughts about manning our Ships of War with the beſt of Sailors, without Violences, &c. By Barnaby Sluſh, Cook of her Majeſty's Ship the Lyme. The Prieſt turn'd Poet, or the beſt way of anſwering Dr. Sacheverell's Sermon, preach'd at St. Paul's, Nov. 5. 1709, before the right Honourable the Lord Mayor, Aldermen, and Citizens of London, being his Diſcourſe paraphras'd in Burleſque Rhime. Secret Memoirs and Intrigues of State-Letters during this War, under the Conduct of his Excellency Charles Earl of Peterborough and Monmouth, &c. Secret Memoirs of the Life of the honourable Sir Cloudſly Shovel, Kt. Admiral of Great Britain, &c. A Poem humbly inſcrib'd to his Grace the Duke of Marlborough, occaſion'd upon his repeated Victories in Flanders. By W. C. an Officer of Major General How's Regiment. Price 6 d. Scipio Britannicus, the Scourge of France, an heroick Poem, inſcrib'd to the immortal Glory of his Grace, John, Duke of Marlborough, Prince of Mindleheim. Alſo a Latin Poem, annex'd to the Chriſtian Hannibal, the moſt illuſtrious Prince Eugene of Savoy. By T. G. Phyſician in Eſſex. Price 6 d. The ſeditious Inſects, or the Levellers aſſembl'd in Convocation. Price 1 s. The Sotweed Factor, or a Voyage to Maryland. Price 6 d. Poems on ſeveral Occaſions, by Thomas Couch, A. B. Oxon. Price 1 s. The Life and Reign of Peter the IId, late King of Portugal. Price 1 s. The Landlord's Tale, from the twenty eighth Book of Orlando Furioſo. Price 1 s. The Hiſtory of Don Politico Piſcatori, or the political Fiſher-man. Price 6 d. To begin Harveſt three Days too ſoon, rather than two Days too late, or Sentences of the Diſſenters. Price 1 s. The material modern Controverſy about the Soul's Immateriality. Price 6 d. Murder within Doors, or a War among our ſelves. Price 1 s. The Soldiers Directory. Price 1 s. The four Ages of England, or the Iron Age. Price 6 d. All ſold by B. Bragge in Pater-Noſter-Row.

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